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Proteus aircraft supports Airborne Laser tests

by Ken Englade, Directed Energy Directorate

KIRTLAND AIR FORCE BASE, N.M. — The Proteus, a one-of-a-kind aircraft built by Scaled Composites LLC of Mojave, Calif., flew into Kirtland Air Force Base April 28.

The aircraft was in New Mexico, concluding a series of tests designed to prove the effectiveness of the unique target board attached to its underside. The Proteus will play a vital role in future tests of the Airborne Laser, a Missile Defense Agency asset which will help protect the United States and its allies from hostile missile attack. Three of the lasers used by ABL will be fired at the target board to demonstrate accuracy and performance, an important test series leading to the shootdown of a scud-like missile.

The Proteus flew a series of missions over White Sands Missile Range in the southern part of the state, during which laser beams fired from 8,000-foot-high North Oscura Peak registered against special sensors embedded in the missile-shaped target board. The Air Force Research Laboratory's Directed Energy Directorate operates North Oscura Peak and assisted in the tests. @